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**THEATRE "ZERO":
DELIVERING
MESSAGE
THROUGH DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY
IN LIVE STAGE
PERFORMANCE**

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Abstract

This paper mainly discusses a devised theatre titled “Zero”. The debate mostly will reveal how technology helps this play delivering the message to the audience by using the technology. This writing is through the director’s perspective that will disclose how he decides to implement technology in presenting “Zero”. The technology involves in the making of zero includes automated lighting, projection and live video camera recording. These three elements play a big role in delivering messages to the audience throughout the play. Technology became essential in theatre design. The process is explained in this writing mainly will circulate theatre “Zero” that has been performed at UNIMAS in 2018.

Keywords: Devised theatre; performance technology; stage; art and technology; performing arts

Introduction

Technology and theatre can work uniquely in a stage performance. Theatre evolves enormously after the technology has been introduced to the field. Some live collaboration succeeds spectacularly, and others did not manage to give an impact. It takes much courage for the director to decide to use technology in his/her play. This is because adding the technology means extra work for the production to deal with especially in term of the execution. Besides, using technology into the live performance is also adding cost to the production. Much conversation happens between the director and producer on the significant implementing the technology in his/her concept.

In the past, theatre started in ancient Greece as a part of the culture, celebrating the god of Dionysus. Since then, the theatre went through many revolutions. Aristotle, in *The Poetic*, defines the six elements of drama as theme, language, characters, plot, music and spectacle. Each of these elements come together to create and enhance storytelling. The element of spectacle involves technical elements to intensify storytelling, elicit emotions, and add to the general awe of the experience (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, & Halliwell, 1995). This reflects that theatre emphasises the spectacle in presenting the play. By having a technology, spectacle element can be enhanced, and directors can choose whatever medium they want, ranging from sound to screen projection to deliver the meaning of the play.

Using digital technology also gives the director many challenges. Tajtakova (2014) reviewed the PEW study (Thomson, Purcell, & Rainie, 2013 p. 51) [that]

identified several challenges of digital technology that were associated with changing audience expectations:

- The audience will have higher expectations for a live event regarding greater participation, including behind-the-scenes access and higher quality performance.
- The audience has already moved from “arts attendance as an event” to “arts attendance as an experience.” There is a desire for a full range of positive experience from ticket purchase, to travel, to parking, to treatment at the space, to the quality of performance, and to exit.
- The audience will expect everything to be available digitally and will require an engaging experience instead of a static one.
- The public expects internet and digital content to be free. However, there is a lack of awareness of the resources (funding and staff) used to manage and preserve the digital content. These costs will need to be passed on to users.

Devised Theatre

The theatre is a medium for people to express their emotions, to get to understand themselves, learn about humanity as well as their inner, physical, and spiritual worlds. There are many theatre forms such as musical, realism, experimental and others. In Malaysia, audiences have been exposed to musical theatre because that genre is frequently performed here. An over-abundance of one form of theatre is not a healthy environment for the theatre development in Malaysia. Due to that, the researcher chooses devised theatre as the style for the researcher’s final directing project.

Devised theatre is another type of theatre, which is relatively new in Malaysia. Many theatre companies in the west have already performed this type of theatre for some years. Many directors use this type of theatre to produce the play without using a playwright. This is one of the main characteristics of devised theatre. Furthermore, this kind of theatre is also used a lot of the creative process. It does not have any script; it only has an issue, which is explored by various methods while devising a play.

According to Bradwell (2012), devised theatre is a theatre, which has been created through improvisation. In his book, Bradwell describes it as a theatre without a playwright. It makes sense when the process of creating this kind of play starts with an issue; then, it will be expanded through an improvisation exercise that is conducted after an interview with the people who involves with the issue. No playwright role is involved.